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ABSTRACT

The factors necessary for implementing and maintaining an individualized adult reading lab are outlined briefly in this paper. Teaching approaches that make the lab suitable for remedial readers, as well as how the individualized approach can help the student beyond the basics of reading are discussed under the heading of components. Suggestions for scheduling and coordinating the lab with content area courses are presented in the organization section of the outline, while classroom management and grading are discussed in the sections on operation and evaluation. (HTH)

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PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTING AN EFFECTIVE
READING AND STUDY SKILLS LAB

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PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTING AN EFFECTIVE READING AND STUDY SKILLS LAB

Objective

To present a complete outline for development and implementation of a reading and study skills laboratory.

Background

Test results at the Adult Day and Evening School in Oakland, California, indicated that 84% of the adult students were reading at or below the 7th grade level, and 58% were reading at or below the 4th grade level. The problem was how to service a large number of students in a way that would have an impact on their lives and not just be more of the same old thing. The reading and study skills lab approach was chosen. It proved to be extremely effective and both posttests and student evaluations attest to the positive influence the lab has had in the lives of the students.

Components of a Good Program

1. Should be individualized, considering the desire, interest and ability of the learner. Remedial students all have problems. What the individual needs is success with his/her own problems.
2. Should include decoding and spelling through auditory and visual techniques.
3. Should provide for development of vocabulary as needed. This would include making vocabulary meaningful, developing ability to get meaning from context, and helping vocabulary to become sight vocabulary.
4. Should provide for continued growth of comprehension and study skills. Comprehension skills must be developed in depth and graded in level so that the student can learn each skill at each level. Teaching these skills can't be a one shot thing. Students need many opportunities at many levels for each skill.
5. Should contain high interest materials with controlled vocabulary. Remedial readers are reluctant and get discouraged easily. Materials with a controlled vocabulary which spirals up through levels provide an ideal situation.
6. Should teach the learner to be flexible, to change speed, method of attack etc. to fit the purpose for reading.

7. Should encourage fluency development and growth and increase in rate. On the subject of fluency, I mean the ability to read with comfort, with adequate rate, maintaining good comprehension.

Rationale

(What Can An Individual Approach to Reading Do For My Students?)

1. Allows each student to enter the reading situation at his/her level of need and work at his/her own speed. This will be different for each student.
2. Gives the student a great deal of responsibility for his/her own learning, so that accountability for progress or failure is shared by both the student and teacher. A teacher should not be trying to train students to need them, but to cause them to have confidence in themselves and their own learning. Until the student takes responsibility for their self, nothing happens. Students can get their own material and manage their own program. We are really making an investment in the student.
3. Builds self-esteem. Students are able to see immediate progress without feeling any of the self-consciousness commonly associated with their lack of skills. They aren't being compared to anyone. Working alone allows the remedial student privacy while he/she is building skills.

4. Allows a high-risk unmotivated student to be successful. That student can have immediate success at the level of entry. Success breeds motivation and stops a lot of the coping mechanisms students sometimes use to cover their reading problems.
5. Provides an inviting rather than threatening atmosphere. Students like to be there.
6. Furnishes a multi-media approach which is successful with different learning modalities. You need different ways to approach different students at the remedial level.
7. Provides an opportunity for individual teacher/student conferences. The teacher has an opportunity in frank discussion with an individual student to outline strengths, weaknesses, and plan for remediation. This way, the student knows exactly where he/she stands, and where they should be in the future.

Organization

(How Do I Set It Up?)

1. Providing an inter-correlated systematic program. Use materials which build from reading level to reading level, skill to skill, with a vocabulary component which builds and allows for continued growth. In other words, organization to what you are doing, rather than just skills and work.

2. Individualizing a program.

Decide on instructional modules to be used. These modules could be according to reading level, skill, etc. The important thing is that they allow entry at the level of need for each student.

3. Scheduling.

Once you have decided on the instructional modules you will use, consider some basic ideas:

- A. Scheduling should allow for each student to participate in a variety of activities with a variety of activity types (Visual, auditory, etc.).
- B. Scheduling decided upon should be easily workable for both you and the student, without a lot of bookkeeping. Organization is the key.
- C. The scheduling system you choose should not limit possible student progress, nor put undue stress on a student to keep up.
- D. Allow for success for each student.

4. Coordination with Content Area Classes.

Once you have a program together, plan an inservice workshop to explain your program and its operation to the other teachers in the school. You need their support. Show them how what you are doing can coordinate with their content area classes. Give them some suggestions for developing reading skills with their classroom material. Support of the staff and administration is worth every effort you will expend.

Operation

(How Do I Keep It Going?)

1. Set standards.

Let each student know what will be expected of him/her.

Remedial students need structure.

2. Orientation.

A thorough orientation to your program and all the materials is well worth the time you will spend. Experience has shown that going through each component of the program with the class as a group, doing actual lessons, then allowing students to practice operation of the materials including machines, has prepared students to use the materials correctly when they start to work individually.

3. Classroom management.

Consider the following:

- A. Provide each student with a schedule of activities which he/she is to follow.
- B. Keep a copy of each student/s schedule in a binder for your use.
- C. If the situation allows, have the students correct their own work when it is completed. They learn more. Have the students work for at least 70% mastery. Make goals higher if you can.

4. Encourage wide reading.

Consider implementing one of the following: Silent Sustained Reading, large paperback library, oral reading by the teacher as a model, literature as motivation.

5. Help for the teacher.

- A. Peer-tutoring
- B. Classroom aides

Evaluation

(Is It Working?)

1. Placement.

The teacher will need an indication of the reading skills and/or reading level of each student. This could be determined by school-wide screening tests, standardized tests, diagnostic tests, etc. The lab program you put together may determine your placement device. As a general rule, when placing students in an individualized lab program, drop them two reading levels below the tested level for work in the lab. This allows them to work at their independent level where the vocabulary should be familiar enough that the student can concentrate on the skills to be learned.

2. Pretesting and posttesting.

Testing students before they enter the program and at intervals along the way gives them and you a sense of achievement. It is also helpful in getting support for your program. I

test often because there is always progress, and it spurs the students on to work even harder. Testing should be an uncomplicated thing, not involving a lot of time. For motivation, get test results back to the students as soon as possible. Make testing as unthreatening as possible.

3. Monitoring achievement.

Check student work at least each week. Compliment them and give positive feed back often.

4. Grading.

This is an individual thing. I prefer to grade students on their diligence, interest and attendance, rather than how many volumes of work they turn out, or how many correct answers they display. Learning involves making mistakes. I prefer to have my students stay with a particular assignment until they understand it, rather than hurrying on to the next assignment.